

Remarks at a Luncheon for Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis of California
in San Francisco
August 11, 1998

Thank you. Well, thank you, Governor Davis. That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? [*Applause*] That sounds pretty good. You know, Gray was up here making all those sort of funny, self-deprecating remarks about being dull, and I thought, well, as long as we carry Willie Brown around with us, all the rest of us will look dull. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Mayor, it's nice to be back in your city. I'd like to thank all the Members of Congress who are here: Representatives Harman and Tauscher and Lantos and Sanchez and, I believe, visiting Representatives Reyes and McCarthy.

Senator Cranston, thank you for coming. It's good to see you looking so young and fit. When I was a young Governor, I used to go to Washington, DC, and every morning I'd get up very early and go running along The Mall in Washington. And I would end down there around—there's a pool right in front of the Capitol, and I'd run around that three or four times. The only person I ever saw up that early running was Alan Cranston. And I've never forgotten it, and I am delighted to see him.

I want to compliment the Democrats in California on putting together such an impressive ticket, with Cruz Bustamante and my longtime friend Phil Angelides and Senator Lockyer and Michela Alioto, who used to work with us in the administration; Delaine Eastin and Kathleen Connell—all of these people are very, very impressive, and they'll be a good team with Gray Davis. And I want to compliment you on that.

I'd also like to say to Gray and Sharon, I thank you for offering yourselves to California and to its future. I am deeply indebted, and I promised myself I would never come out here again without just saying thank you to the people of California for making it possible for Hillary and me and for Al and Tipper Gore to serve our country, to help to move America forward, to help to bring America back. And of course, now I have a little extra debt to California for the educational opportunity you're giving to our daughter. And I thank you for that.

I want to make a few brief points. Everything that needs to be said has been said; not everyone has said it yet. But I would like to make a couple of points that I'd ask you to keep in mind between now and the November election as events heat up and unfold. I am very glad and grateful that you have come here to this fundraiser, that you have contributed to this good man's worthy campaign, and I thank you for that. But one of the things we really need in America and in California at this moment of renewed prosperity and opportunity is for people to take more interest in the daily work of citizenship and to understand that there really is a connection between the decisions elected officials make and the consequences we feel in our daily lives.

That is so important. It may sound so self-evident to you. But do you ever ask yourself why an otherwise responsible person who has to get up and work every day and is forced to pay taxes, and if times are bad, suffers for it, and if times are good, benefits from it—a normal American that doesn't vote—millions of them don't? It is, I think, because they don't understand the connection between the decisions made by people in public life and the conditions they face, and they don't believe they can make a difference. But they can make all the difference.

Now, if you look at where we are as a country today compared to where we were—Gray said some of this—we have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years and the lowest crime rate in 25 years and the lowest percentage of people on welfare in 29 years; we're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, with the lowest inflation in 32 years, the highest homeownership in history; and the Federal Government is the smallest it's been in 35 years. That's pretty good. That's pretty good.

The American people deserve the lion's share of credit for this because of their hard work, their ingenuity, getting over some of the economic problems of the eighties. But the policies of the Government are not unrelated to what has happened. They have created the conditions

and given people the tools to make these good things happen.

And I say that because I think—if you think of the changes that have been made in the last 6 years and then the things you're facing here in this State over the next 6 years, I think you can make a compelling argument that it is more important than ever before who is the Governor of California. What is his philosophy—in this case, since you have two male candidates—what is the dominant philosophy? How is the job defined? How will their positions on issues and the actions they take affect the lives that you and your children and the people you care about live? Will it be something that fits in with what we have tried to do in Washington to bring America back? Will it be an administration that makes the most of every opportunity that we could provide in the next 2 years and, hopefully, beyond?

This is an important election. This is a huge deal. If we've had the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, it means that we have, among other things, given more flexibility to the States in how they pursue education reform. One thing the legislature has done—thank you, Senator Lockyer—that I approve of strongly is to support the charter school movement out here, which are public schools, but they're created under new rules without so much hassle from central administration, and they have high standards, and they only stay in existence as long as they meet them. It is a great reform. California is now leading the way there.

Now, we have all kinds of programs to support those charter schools. When I became President, there was one charter school in America. And I was out there talking about—in 1992 it wasn't one of the more widely applauded parts of my campaign speech, because most people didn't know what they were. There are now 1,000—1,000—and I want there to be at least 3,000 by the year 2000. It's very important. In California, you've got all these different kinds of folks with all these different challenges and ideas and opportunities; this is the ideal place in America to have a real generation of this. It'll matter a lot what the policy of the administration is on this.

We are ahead of schedule and under budget in putting 100,000 police officers on the street. That has contributed to the decline in the crime rate. And I just want to say it's important to remember that it matters whether the mayors

and whether the Governor really believe in what we're trying to do and are really trying to help grassroots law enforcement officials drive the crime rate down to make sure California gets its fair share of those remaining officers.

In the Balanced Budget Act, we passed a bill, as a part of the Balanced Budget Act, to provide for health insurance for 5 million children—mostly the children of the working poor who do not have health insurance. But the system by which they will be insured must be developed State by State. Now, from the day I became President, even before, I was besieged by appeals from representatives from California about the unfair cost California bore of health care, because the Federal Government didn't pick up its legitimate share of what should be the health care burdens of the State of California. Now, California's about 13 percent of America's population, but more—I'll bet you anything—more of the percentage of uninsured children who are eligible for this program.

You need somebody who believes in the potential of government to alleviate problems and strengthen our common life to be the Governor, to make sure that we do this right. I worked very hard to get that \$24 billion in that Balanced Budget Act. I want 5 million kids to know and I want their parents to have the peace of mind to know that they can have health care if they need it. But it's got to be implemented by the Governors. So, anyway, you get the point.

Gray and I were out here the other day; we were talking about—we had this oceans conference on the Monterey Peninsula. We had to face the fact that the ocean quality in this country is deteriorating. The global warming, among other things, is changing the whole bio-structure along the coastline, and we need to help meet this challenge. Now, some of this is a national challenge, but some of it is a State challenge. You can't think of an area of our common life where it won't make a difference who the Governor is.

I spent a lot of time talking about our big challenges as a nation: education; growing the economy while preserving the environment; extending economic opportunity to people who haven't felt it, even in the recovery; quality health care for everybody; passing a Patients' Bill of Rights to guarantee people the right, even in an HMO, to emergency room care and appropriate specialists, privacy for their records.

These kinds of challenges are important—proving that we can be one America across all the racial and ethnic and religious and other lines that divide us. And by the way, I'm getting sick and tired of coming to San Francisco and saying, as I must say one more time, Jim Hormel should have a hearing. Anyway, these are big issues.

Now, in almost everything—there is one thing I have to do in the next year that I don't believe the Governors can help or hurt on, and that is that Congress should not spend any of this surplus until we have saved Social Security for the 21st century and alleviated the questions that are there. And we have some national security matters, as we've been painfully reminded of in the last few days, that are national. Every other single challenge I'm trying to get our country to face will be better met if there is a strong person in the Governor's office who has your values and cares about the future of your children.

I have to put in a plug, too, for Senator Boxer and for the Members of our House delegation that are up. You know, everybody is going around celebrating the new economy. But I just want to remind you that way back in 1993, 5 years ago this month, when all the chips were on the line and America finally had to decide whether we were going to unhook ourselves from this addictive deficit spending we had been doing, and I presented a plan to the Congress to reduce the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars, there was not a single member of the other party that voted for it, and it passed by one vote in both Houses. So I would say to the people of California, if you like where the California economy is today, remember, if Barbara Boxer had voted the other way, we wouldn't be here today. And she deserves to be reelected to the Senate this November.

So here's the last point I want to make. I thank you for being here. I thank you for contributing to Gray Davis. I thank you for your good citizenship. I thank you for the support of the initiatives of the administration, for the friendship you have given to the First Lady, to me, to the Vice President, to our families. And I will always be grateful to California. But the thing that I don't want to see happen is this: The most natural thing in the world when times are good, after they've been tough, is for people to relax when times are good. Isn't it? It's natural in your personal life, your family

life, your business life. People say to me all the time, "Man, it was tough out here before the last 4 or 5 years; we worked hard to get California back." My advice to you is to go out and tell your friends and neighbors that this is a time too dynamic to rest in. You can enjoy it, but you can't take it for granted, and you can't kick back.

I think the only thing that could keep this good man from becoming Governor is a low voter turnout caused by people who think that things have been made all right, therefore there is nothing for them to do, and the consequences are not so great. Nothing could be further from the truth. When things are changing as fast as they are changing now, good times are not to be relaxed in; they are to be seized, used, made the most of. We have the confidence, the resources to face the long-term challenges of the country, to think about the future. That's what you've got to go out and tell people.

So you give him the contributions; that makes it possible for his voice to be heard across a bigger microphone. But you have a voice every day. You come in contact with people every day. And you have to convey your sense of confidence and pride in the people you support and where we are now, but also a sense of urgency that we have big challenges to face, that the world is changing, and that our best days are before us, but only if we remember our fundamental responsibilities, as citizens, to the future.

California has always been about the future. This is not a time to relax in that pursuit. We've worked too hard to get this far. We have to take advantage of it. And the best way to do it is to elect Gray Davis Governor.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Westin Saint Francis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr., of San Francisco; Representative Karen McCarthy; former Senator Alan Cranston; State Assembly Speaker Cruz Bustamante, candidate for Lieutenant Governor; Phil Angelides, candidate for State treasurer; State Senator Bill Lockyer; Michela Alioto, candidate for California secretary of state; Delaine Eastin, State superintendent of public instruction; Kathleen Connell, State controller; and James C. Hormel, nominee for Ambassador to Luxembourg.